

RACE TO ALASKA

750 miles, No motors, No support, All the way to Alaska.

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2018 Pre-Race Guide

Official Start Dates & Times

Stage One: Thursday, June 14 at 0500, Port Townsend, WA
Stage Two: Sunday, June 17 at 1200, Victoria, BC

What the h-e-double hockey sticks is R2AK?

Well, it's a race...to Alaska. R2AK is a wind and human powered adventure race starting in Port Townsend, WA, and is based on the hardest form of simplicity: Get a boat without a motor, race engineless and unsupported all the way to Ketchikan, AK, and if you get there first you get \$10,000! Second prize is a set of steak knives. It's the spirit of tradition, exploration, and lawless self-reliance that has drawn native canoes, explorers, and adventurers up the Inside Passage and towards Alaska since time immemorial. It's 750 cold-water miles, all the way to Alaska.

What are the race stages? How does this work?

The race is broken into two stages. Teams can choose between racing in Stage One only, or racing the full race to Alaska.

- Stage One (The Proving Ground) is the 40 mile stretch between Port Townsend, WA, and Victoria, BC.
- Stage Two (To The Bitter End) is the final 710 miles to Ketchikan, AK.

How many teams are there? How many racers?

45 total teams. 36 teams are racing the full race, 9 teams are racing in Stage One only. There are 114 total racers!

How many different types of vessels are racing?

No idea, haven't counted. But there are SUPs, kayaks, sailboats under 20', monohulls up to 44', catamarans up to 34', and trimarans up to 32'.

What's the biggest boat in the full race?

Team Super Friends on a Peterson IOR Flush Deck with LOA of 44'.

What's the smallest boat in the full race?

Team Extreme Sobriety on a Blakeley Boards prone paddleboard.

What's the craziest boat racing?

Pick your flavor of crazy and we have it.

What? Last year a stand-up paddleboard completed the race; now a prone paddle-boarder is racing?

Don't know what prone is? We didn't either. He will be lying on his stomach all the way to Ketchikan using his hands like flippers.

Which team has the most crew?

First Federal's Team Sail Like a Girl has an all-women crew of 8.

How many solo teams are racing?

There are 10 solo teams racing to Ketchikan.

How many teams have finished?

Last year 26 teams finished out of the 45 that started.

When will this year's boats finish?

We ain't wizards or makers of wind. If we knew, we'd make millions off the bookies!

What happens if someone gets lost?

They get unlost or become one with the spirit bears of Princess Royal Island.

Can I enter this year's race?

No. The deadline for applications was April 15. But, if we run it again in 2019, you can apply like everyone else.

What else should I know about R2AK?

Even more than most years, this race has bonkers level of human interest stories: paddle boarders doing it for veterans, a team of sailors under 20 years old, a boat that was only uncrated from the factory three weeks ago, a guy who literally trained his ass off—lost 100 pounds pedalling all winter just to get ready. Turn over a rock, you'll probably find a story this year.

Are there really no rules? None at all?

Yes. Well, mostly. Bring a boat to Port Townsend, WA, finish in Ketchikan, AK, don't have a motor, be self-supported along the way. Other than two waypoints, the route choice is yours.

Why aren't there classes?

We have no class! We thought that was clear? The challenge of the race is to see which engineless boat can get to Ketchikan, AK, first. Faster/larger boats have different challenges than smaller/slower boats, human powered boats have advantages over sail, and vice versa. We tried to remove as many constructs as possible so that the race is really about the teams on the water rather than gaming some system. The sea is the greatest judge of seamanship. Plus, who wants to do all of that math?

Won't sailboats/multihulls always win? Why not just make it a sail race then?

Who knows, but they all keep applying. We think it has something to do with the fact that they are not racing each other, but themselves. That it's not about winning; it's about finishing. But you should probably ask them.

How long does the race take?

It takes anywhere from 4 days to 25. The slowest speed is 1.5 knots over 25 days. Think of your dog walking, and cut that speed in half.

What's the deal with the trackers?

There is one on every boat, and if they work, you can track the race in real time on R2AK.com. We even have tracker t-shirts for you hardcore tracker junkies!

Flip this bad boy over for more info and a full-course chart!

What does this have to do with the NWMC?
I thought you guys were all wooden boats?

The NWMC is about getting people jazzed about our watery world and out in boats however possible. This race and the Wooden Boat Festival are merely two ways in which we strive to create access to our marine environment.

Why no engines?

Why engines? They are so turn of the century. We wanted a challenge for sailors and adventurers alike, not mechanics.

Are you going to do this next year?

Interesting idea...come to the R2AK Blazer Party in September at the Wooden Boat Festival in Port Townsend, WA, and find out—that's when we announce plans for next year.

Isn't this dangerous? Do you have safety boats?

This is a self-supported race. There is no race specific support or safety boats, and teams are prohibited from bringing their own. This race is as much about self-reliance as it is about sailing. We suggest not getting yourself into trouble you can't get yourself out of. We do, however, share tons of information with official search and rescue agencies all up the coast, which has really helped in our preparedness.

What are the weather and currents like?

Who knows! That's always a big gamble. Those waters could be smooth like honey finding equilibrium or waves with the power of anvils coming down on you every six seconds. The only constant is a viciously strong current and a strong likelihood that when the wind does come, it'll be on your nose.

Do the racers sail at night?

They don't have to. They don't have to do anything, but some crews will travel at night at least some of the time.

Isn't there a lot of driftwood floating around? How will the racers see debris at night?

Yes, there is, and we don't know. There is a lot of driftwood and tsunami debris along the race route, sometimes floating just under the surface of the water. This is definitely something to consider while traveling at night—especially for the boats with high-end speed like multihulls, planing sailboats, etc.

In all seriousness, hitting a log that puts a hole in your hull is probably more of a safety risk than the bears.

What happens at the finish line in Ketchikan, AK?

We usually hand the finishing team a six-pack of beer and give them a few minutes to regain their faculties. Then we whoop and holler and slap them on the backs.

Why steak knives for second place? What the what?

Glengarry Glen Ross my friend. Watch it.

Where do babies come from?

Ask your mother.

